

Department of Correction — Intradepartmental Memorandum

Date : March 20, 1980
To : Barbara Radin
From : John Rakis, Staff Analyst, C.O.C.D. *JR*
Subject : MODEL FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION AIDE PROGRAM

The following model for the Suicide Prevention Aide Program was designed to eliminate the deficiencies noted in the report prepared by the Conditions of Confinement Division. (See attached report.) It provides a general framework within which each and every institution can design and implement its own procedures.

MODEL FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION AIDE PROGRAMA. Screening of Suicide Aides

1. All inmates shall be screened for those qualities that would make them good aides. These qualities include, but are not limited to, motivation, alertness, conscientiousness.
2. Suicide aides shall not receive medication that would interfere with their effectiveness. The medical staff shall, therefore, clear all potential suicide aides. After selection as a suicide aide, the inmate's folder shall be marked to indicate his status. If a suicide aide is prescribed medication that would impair his effectiveness, the medical staff shall notify the program office.
3. In order to prevent a rapid turnover of suicide aides, an attempt shall be made to choose inmates that expect to be incarcerated for a good length of time.

A. Screening of Suicide Aides (cont'd)

4. A Suicide Aide Selection Committee shall approve the hiring of all suicide aides. The committee shall consist of one (1) member from the mental health staff, one (1) member from the institution's security office, and one (1) member from the institution's program office.

B. Training

1. An on-going training program shall be mandatory for all suicide Aides.
2. Staff, as well as inmates, shall participate in the training program.
3. The institution shall provide classroom space for a weekly training session.
4. A person with the appropriate qualifications shall travel to each institution and conduct weekly training sessions.
5. The training program shall include, but not be limited to, the following topics:
 - a) Rules for Suicide Aides
 - b) Who Can Become a Mental Patient?
 - c) Why do People Commit Suicide?
 - d) Categories of Suicidal Persons
 - e) Popular Myths About Suicide
 - f) How to approach a Depressed Inmate
 - g) How to approach a Paranoid Inmate
 - h) How to approach New Admissions and Court Returns
 - i) Non-Verbal Communication and Listening
 - j) How to communicate, "I'm With You"

B. Training (cont'd)

- k) Questions to Ask a Suicidal Inmate
- l) Medicine for Mental Patients
- m) First Aid
- n) Man Hanging! What To Do

6. Certificates of achievement shall be given upon completion of a certain amount of course hours.

C. Duties and Responsibilities of Suicide Prevention Aides

1. Suicide Prevention Aides shall frequently patrol their assigned areas and report unusual or suicidal behavior to the Correction Officer on duty.
2. Suicide Prevention Aides shall provide support to those inmates in distress by talking with these inmates, identifying their needs, and communicating those needs to the Correction Officer or the appropriate staff.
3. Following a suicide attempt, the Suicide Prevention Aide shall provide the Correction Officer with whatever assistance the Correction Officer deems necessary. The Suicide Prevention Aide shall not, however, be responsible for resuscitating the injured inmate.

D. Working Conditions

1. Suicide aides who earn certificates shall receive the highest pay for inmate help.
2. Suicide aides shall receive coffee and sandwiches during the night shift.

D. Working Conditions (cont'd)

3. Suicide aides shall be provided with an article of clothing that distinguishes them from other inmates.

E. Log Sheets

1. Log sheets for suicide aides shall be maintained in all housing areas. Entries on these log sheets should be limited to simple observations.

F. Monthly Utilization Report

1. A monthly utilization report shall be submitted by the person designated to oversee the Institution's program to the Warden. A copy of this report shall be submitted to the Deputy Commissioner for Program and Legal Services.

G. Administrative Meetings

1. Each facility shall schedule and conduct a monthly meeting to address and resolve problems encountered by the institution's suicide prevention aide program. Participants shall include a suicide aide(s), a correction officer(s), the person designated to train the aides, a representative from the mental health staff and a representative from the institution's program office. Minutes of this meeting shall be included in the monthly utilization report.

H. Deviations From Guidelines

1. The person designated by the Warden to oversee the Institution's Program shall ensure that the program operates within the prescribed guidelines. Deviations from these guidelines shall not be permitted without consent from the office of the Deputy Commissioner for Program and Legal Services.

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